

Meditation lowers stress and supports forgiveness among college students.

Friday, 30 May 2008

Meditation Increases Forgiveness, Reduces Stress in College Students

In a small randomized, controlled study, researchers at Berkeley find that two different kinds of simple, user-friendly meditation increased forgiveness and reduced stress... Using a pre-test/post-test design, researchers from the School of Public Health, University of California at Berkeley evaluated the effects of mindfulness meditation on stress, rumination, forgiveness, and hope in college undergraduates. The intervention consisted of two 8-week, 90-minute training programs in meditation-based stress-management.

After a pretest, the college undergraduates were randomly assigned to either training in (1) Jon Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; $n = 15$), (2) Eknath Easwaran's Eight-Point Meditation Program (EPP; $n = 14$), or a wait-list control condition ($n = 15$).

The authors gathered pre-test, post-test, and 8-week follow-up data on self-reported outcome measures, finding no post-treatment differences between the two kinds of meditation (MBSR and EPP), or between post-test and 8-week follow-up ($p > .10$).

Compared with the controls, treated participants ($n = 29$) demonstrated significant benefits for stress ($p < .05$, Cohen's $d = -.45$) and forgiveness ($p < .05$, $d = .34$) and marginal benefits for rumination ($p < .10$, $d = -.34$).

The study concludes that meditation-based stress-management practices reduce stress and enhance forgiveness among college undergraduates, and suggests that such programs merit further study as potential health-promotion tools for college populations and for others.

Citation: Oman D, Shapiro SL, Thoresen CE, Plante TG, Flinders T. Meditation lowers stress and supports forgiveness among college students: a randomized controlled trial. Journal of American College Health. 2008 Mar-Apr; 56 (5): pages 569-78. dougoman@post.harvard.edu